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ARSONIST PLEADS GUILTY IN CASE INVOLVING DEATH OF A CHILD

SACRAMENTO - United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that Tu Minh Truong, 27, of Sacramento, pled guilty to participating in the January 7, 1997 firebombing of a residence located at 6100 Merry Lane, Carmichael, California. The home was occupied by two brothers, a sister and the sister's three children. Nine year old Hien Tran died in the fire and her uncle, Duc Tran, suffered third degree burns over more than 30 percent of his body, and has had to undergo extensive reconstructive surgery. Hien Tran's other uncle, Tri Tran, was also injured when he attempted to rescue the little girl from her burning bedroom.

According to his signed plea agreement, Truong acknowledged that an individual named Tanh Huu Lam hired a person named Trung Thanh Pham to kill Tri Tran. Trung Pham and a friend named Quoc Phu Pham then made two unsuccessful attempts to shoot Tran as he was driving home from work. Truong participated in the second of these attempts.

Later, Trung Pham told Lam that he intended to burn Tran's house down. Tu Truong admitted that he, Trung Pham, and Quoc Pham drove to a gas station where they filled two beer bottles, and a multi-gallon water bottle with gasoline. After stuffing rags into the necks of the gasoline-filled beer bottles, the three men drove to Tran's house. At approximately 2:40 a.m. on January 7, 1997 gasoline was poured on Tran's front porch, and the two firebombs were thrown through a front window. According to neighbors, within minutes of the firebombing, the entire front portion of the house was totally engulfed in flames.

In 1999, Tanh Huu Lam pled guilty to his role in arranging the January 7, 1997, firebombing. He is currently serving a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of release. In 2002, Trung Thanh Pham pled guilty to his role in the firebombing, and is also currently serving a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of release. Two weeks ago, Quoc Pham pled guilty to his role in the firebombing, and is awaiting sentencing on May 12, 2004.

Truong is also scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Court Judge William B. Shubb on May 12, 2004. He faces the possibility of receiving a sentence of life imprisonment, though the government has agreed to recommend that the defendant initially be sentenced to a term of 30 years in prison.

This case was investigated by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office.